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FIGS

County of Fresno California

AMONG the many and varied fruit products of California none is being more progressively grown and handled than the fig. While this, probably the oldest known fruit to man, has been grown in California for many years, it is only within the present generation that planting has become general. The California fig industry is now on the threshold of production on a large commercial scale.

Four-fifths of the United States production of figs is grown in California, and four-fifths of the California production comes from Fresno County. This is due to climatic reasons, as the fig demands a warm dry climate. Central California is the only section of the country where the figs can be dried naturally and successfully. Other sections, as those in several southern states, produce figs for canning only.

The importance of the fig industry to the state and to the Union may be judged from the following facts. Close estimates place the 1922 acreage of this fruit in California at 36,000 acres. Approximately 24,500 acres of this total have been planted in the last five years, representing trees that are beginning to come into bearing or have yet to bear. This will give an idea of the prospective large increase in homegrown fig production.

United States Imports Heavily

The waiting field for this production may be understood from the fact that even now America imports over fifty per cent of its figs, and the consumption of this fruit in the country has been steadily increasing for the last ten years.

Although the fig is one of the oldest known fruits, and has been acclimated to California since the days of the Spanish friars, its production has been put upon a commercial scale in the last fifteen years. Originally and for many years the Black Mission, imported from Spain, was the only variety planted. It was followed by the Adriatic, which still figures well at the head of the California production table.

Then about 1886 the Smyrna varieties from Asia Minor—for centuries the chief producer—were introduced rather extensively. The trees flourished splendidly, but the fruit did not mature. The reason why was for years a secret of nature; the figs required to be fertilized. The fertilizing agent discovered was a tiny wasp, which carried the pollen from the wild fig of

Capri, sometimes called the male fig, to the edible or "female" variety. The acclimatized California Smyrna fig then became known as the Calimyrna.

The latest of the four commercial varieties, the Kadota, has begun to bear in marketable quantities, and its qualities are highly regarded.

Growth in Production

The following table gives the home production of figs in the last six years:

Year	Tonnage
1916	6,700
1917	8,000
1918	8,000
1919	10,000
1920	12,000
1921	7,500

The drop in the last year's figures was due to unusual frost conditions. This was the first time the frost had hit the figs in 25 years, but the prices realized for the crop were highly satisfactory.

Taking the highwater mark of California production of figs, in 1920, at 24,000,000 pounds, and the imports for that year of 31,437,000 pounds, it will be seen that the home grown product, without reckoning on increased consumption and widening of markets, has still a large field to cover. These possibilities are being taken care of by the growers' co-operative organization as well as by other marketing agencies.

Grower Co-operation

The year 1920 marks the beginning of a new era in the fig industry. The direc-

tors of the California Peach Growers, Inc., decided in May to undertake the marketing of figs as well as peaches and a successful campaign was carried on to sign up the fig acreage and secure contracts for the crops. While there has been a temporary slump in prices of figs as there has been with all dried fruits, the co-operative marketing of the crop both fresh and dried has already put fig culture on a substantial basis.

The organization, whose headquarters is at Fresno, is now known as the California Peach & Fig Growers, Incorporated. Its products are marketed under the well-known Blue Ribbon, Purple Ribbon, Fig Brownie, Fig Meat and other brands.

The largest fig orchards in the world are in Fresno County, these being the plantings of the J. C. Forkner Company, and just about coming into bearing.

Varieties and Characteristics

The bulk of the crop of California figs is dried. The points desirable in a variety of figs used for drying purposes are:

First, vigorous growth of trees; second, heavy production of trees; third, resistance of the fruit to splitting and souring; fourth, quality of dried product.

The Mission Fig tree grows vigorously and produces heavily, both of the first and second crops. The fruit resists unfavorable conditions which induce splitting and souring. The main point against the Mission fig is the color, the purchasing public having been used to getting figs of lighter color.

The Adriatic tree grows vigorously and bears heavily, the fruit being secured mainly from the second crop. Under good conditions of soil and climate, the Adriatic fig is an excellent variety and enjoys a wide reputation.

The Calimyrna tree grows vigorously and produces one crop, as the figs require caprification. The quality of the fruit is excellent, and considerable plantings of this variety have been made in recent years.

Requirements of Fresh Figs

For shipping, the fruit should be large and firm with a fairly tough skin and a good quality. Results secured this season have demonstrated that fresh Calimyrna figs can be delivered in good condition in New York and that a good demand can be

assured. For canning purposes, figs should be medium in size, light in color and have good quality.

It has been fully demonstrated that practically all varieties of figs can be caprified and made to produce a large proportion of fertile seeds. In most cases caprification improves the quality of the dried product; the fruit is larger, more meaty and of better texture when caprified.

The White Adriatic

The Adriatic fig has been for 40 years the chief drying variety of California. It still leads in production of dried figs. This state now produces a total of 10,700 tons of figs or about 21,500,000 pounds. Of this quantity about 8,000 tons are Adriatic; 1500 tons Calimyrna and 1200 tons Mission.

The White Adriatic has been extensively planted in orchard form in the San Joaquin Valley.

Adriatic trees grow rapidly after planting and come into bearing early if given good care. Four-year-old trees usually bear considerable fruit while trees six years old produce profitable crops. The first crop ripens from the first to the middle of July. The second crop ripens throughout August and during September and October. On account of the dark color of the dried fruit, Adriatic figs are generally sulphured either before or after the drying process. In the valley and foothill districts the trees require very little irrigation if the orchard is kept thoroughly cultivated.

The Mission

The Mission fig, although the oldest variety grown in California, ranks fourth in acreage at the present time. The reason is that the eastern market is prejudiced in favor of the light-colored dried fig. The true Smyrna fig has a beautiful amber or straw color and is translucent, which has gained it a reputation in all markets.

The Mission figs are resistant to unfavorable climatic conditions which affect the crops of other varieties. The fresh figs seldom split or sour. The black smut is rarely found in the Mission.

Smyrna Figs

The Smyrna fig is recognized as the standard of quality among dried figs of the world. The term "Smyrna" designates a type or group of figs rather than a single variety. The word Calimyrna which refers to the variety now most largely planted in this state is a name copyrighted by Mr. George Roeding for a variety which he introduced from Asia Minor. This variety is identical with the Lob Ingir, the principal drying variety of Asia Minor.

The chief advantage of the Smyrna fig from a commercial standpoint is due to the excellent quality of the dried fruit. No other fig-growing country has been able to produce dried figs of other varieties which approximate the Smyrna in flavor and quality. Figs of Italy, Spain and Portugal are all inferior and are exported to other countries mainly for cooking purposes. Since the trade and the consuming public have recognized this superior quality, dried Smyrna figs have always been in greater demand and are quoted at higher prices than white figs of other varieties.

Calimyrna fig trees grow as rapidly and bear as early as those of other varieties except possibly the Kadota. A few figs are frequently produced the third season but the trees cannot be expected to produce profitable crops until the sixth or seventh year in the orchard.

The Kadota

The Kadota fig has been most commonly planted in Fresno and Tulare counties where orchards from one to ten years old are common. The tree is a rank grower when given an abundance of water. Continued frequent irrigations are practiced in order to encourage a vigorous growth of the tree and a heavy production of fresh fruit. The figs are resistant to splitting and souring, faults which are so common with some other varieties.

The rapidity of growth and early development of the Kadota, its heavy bearing qualities and resistance of its fruit to unfavorable climatic conditions, have placed the Kadota among the four leading fig varieties of California. The fruit can be readily marketed fresh both to local and distant markets. It can be preserved or canned or made into jam, such products finding wide favor and good demand. The dried Kadota, while tough and inferior, is a clean and sweet product; with more careful methods of processing it can be marketed to advantage.

Cost of Production

Value of Land	**Average**
Raw land	$200.00
Leveling and ditching	45.83
Water rights, wells	37.50
Preparation of ground and planting	46.05
Trees (30 x 30)	13.25
After care	15.25
Annual cost from first year to self sustaining age	25.00
Total	382.88

Annual Cost for Bearing Orchard:

Irrigation, cultivation, spraying, fertilization	29.69
Pruning	2.66
Caprifying (Smyrna)	12.76
Taxes, interest, etc.	5.72
Total per acre per harvest	50.83

Cost of Harvest:

FRESH

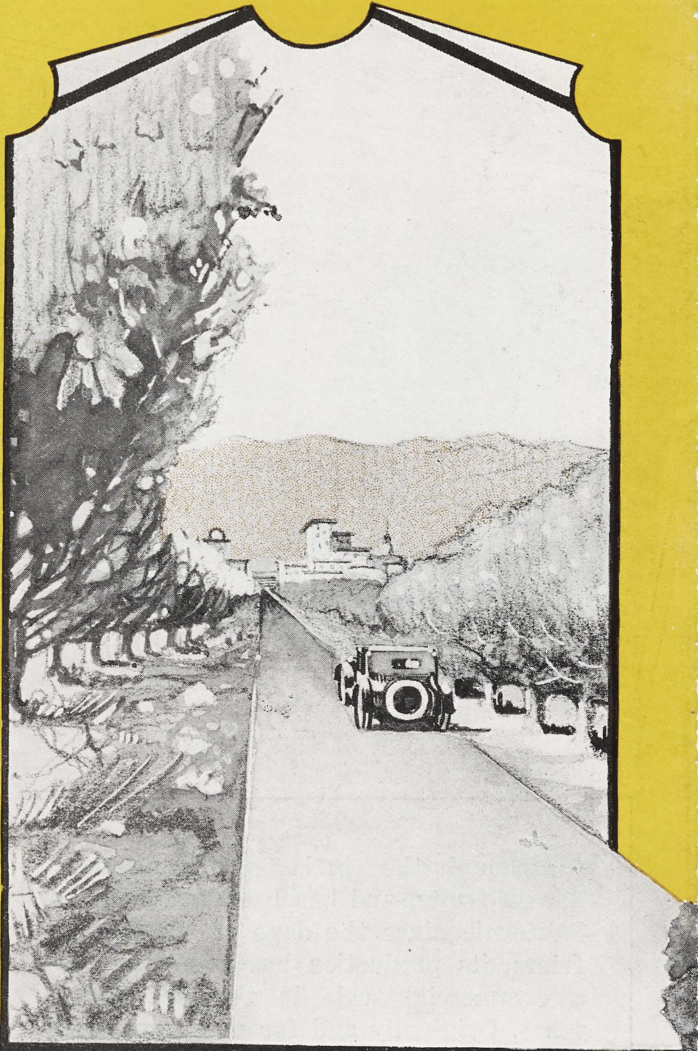
Picking, per pound	.02
Packing, per pound	.005
Hauling, per pound	.002
Packing boxes, per pound	.015
Total, shipping fresh, per pound	.042

DRIED

Picking up, per pound	.0075
Hauling, per pound	.001
Spreading, stacking, boxing, etc.	.003
Sorting, per pound	.0025
Delivering, per pound	.0015
Sulphuring (if necessary) per pound	.00125
Total, $33.50 per ton, or, per pound	.01675

Market Value of Yield:

Average for fresh fruit, per pound	.08
Average for dried fruit—	
Mission, per pound	.07
Adriatic, per pound	.06375
Calimyrna. per pound	.0825



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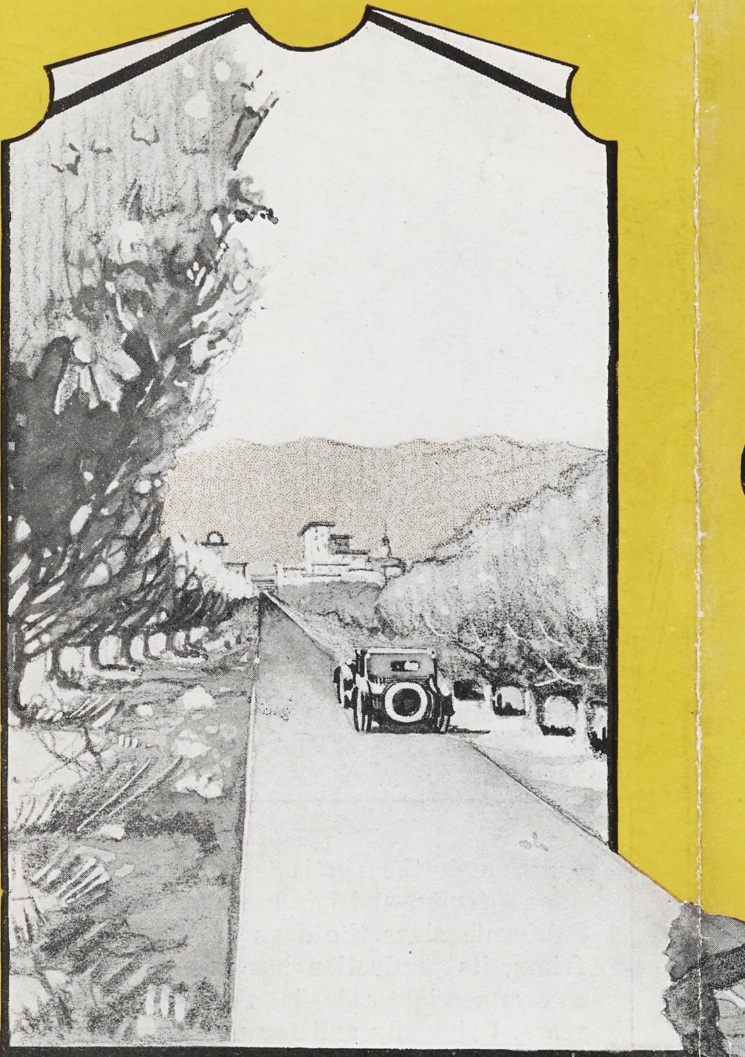

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